

University of West Georgia

Fall 2017

Research Methods

POLS 2601 – 01

Meets: TR 11:00 am - 12:15 pm in Pafford 204 & Library Main Floor Classroom

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION :**

Students are introduced to various quantitative and qualitative research methods used in the social sciences, especially Political Science. They learn how to find, evaluate, and ethically use appropriate information to conduct political science research. They construct research questions and write research papers using case studies, comparative methods, and statistics.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

- Students will determine the nature and extent of the information needed to conduct research by developing a clear and appropriately narrow research focus that is in accordance with the requirements of the assignments.
- Student will identify, distinguish among, and locate a variety of types of sources relevant to political science research; and will accurately identify the main ideas and arguments in the texts they have selected for use in their research projects, evaluating them for reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, point of view or bias, and restate them in their own words.
- Student will create and carry out a formal research design that is: consistent with generally recognized standards in political science, and effectively integrate specific information from the materials they have located.
- Student will cite sources correctly using the APSA format.

**UNIVERSITY POLICIES: Common Language for Course Syllabi**

<https://www.westga.edu/UWGSyllabusPolicies/>

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**Texts:** The following books are available for purchase at the UWG Bookstore:

- Fraser, Gregory, and Chad Davidson. 2012. Analyze Anything: A Guide to Critical Reading and Writing. New York: Continuum.
- Other required readings will be available online through the library's databases (JSTOR, etc.), or the course website in CourseDen.

**Exams:** There will be no exams for this class, but there will be other assessments.

**Attendance:** You cannot participate, contribute, and learn if you are not in class. Therefore, attendance is a requirement of this course. Students are allowed 4 absences. **Students who miss more than 4 lectures will incur a penalty worth 10% of their Final Grade.** Please be aware that I make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences.

**Participation:** The structure of weekly class sessions will include a mixture of lectures, discussions, individual and small group activities, and library research labs. So please come to class prepared and ready to participate in whatever activities are planned for the session. Participation entails attending class, joining in-class debates, being prepared with questions and comments about the readings, and completing in-class activities.

**Article Summaries:** An important component of the course is to read carefully and critically in order to identify, summarize, and evaluate the main ideas and arguments in the assigned readings. The summaries are due as scheduled, and no extensions will be granted. Below is the grading rubric for this activity.

**Table 1. Grading Rubric for Article Summaries**

<b>Performance</b>	<b>Points</b>
No response or inadequate response (unconstructive criticisms, does not link the discussion to the text, incoherent ramblings).	0
Adequate response (identifies the research question and key concepts, but does not identify the theory or the basic components of the research design).	1-2
Good response (identifies research question, key concepts, theory, and the basic components of the research design).	3-4
Excellent response (identifies research question, puzzles, key concepts and theory; evaluates how well the author situates the study in the literature; identifies all components of the research design, and evaluates how well the design and theory help to answer the research question).	5

**Research Project:** You are required to develop a research project for this course, and it will be **worth 60% of the Final Grade**. To ease anxiety over completion of this requirement, it is divided into 5 steps: (1) Research Question Proposal, (2) Annotated Bibliography; (3) Literature Review; (4) First draft; and (5) Final Draft with all components integrated and organized coherently into a whole. That is, you will ask a relevant question; summarize, evaluate, and synthesize the scholarly literature on that question; define concepts and how they are to be measured; discuss and justify your case selection; discuss data or evidence needed and how to gather it; and justify the most appropriate methodology to analyze the evidence.

**Table 2. Grade Calculation – Grades will be calculated as follows:**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Page Count</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>% Grade Value</b>
1	Article Summary (6) Research Design	1-2	TBA in class	30
2	Research Question Proposal	2	Tuesday, 28 August	10
3	Annotated Bibliography	5	Tuesday, 26 September	10
4	Literature Review	3-5	TBA in class	10
5	First Draft	7-10	Tuesday, 06 November	20
6	Final Draft	12-15	Tuesday, 05 December	10
7	Discussion Posts	TBA	TBA in class	10

Please note that **NO curves** or adjustment of scores will be made. Extra credit will be awarded for attendance to special events such as lectures, films, or extra writing assignments. Additional information about the online discussions and the Research Paper Project will be discussed as the semester progresses.

## **CLASSROOM POLICIES:**

1. Please arrive on time.
2. Please turn off all electronic devices (cell phone, iPods, etc.) prior to entering class.
3. Please do not sleep or work on material for other courses during class.
4. Since we will deal with controversial issues, and since it is vital to the success of this class to maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect, personal attacks will not be tolerated.

## **COMMUNICATING with your professor and each other:**

**E-mail:** All e-mail communication will proceed through the course website (CourseDen). Therefore, please do not contact me using personal e-mail accounts (e.g. my.westga, Gmail, Yahoo, etc.) because I will not answer course related messages communicated outside CourseDen. Also, please do not contact me at [jperalta@westga.edu](mailto:jperalta@westga.edu) for the duration of this course unless you have a course related emergency (e.g. medical, personal reasons why you will not be able to fulfill your course obligations for the unforeseen future).

**Discussion board:** There is a discussion board called "Ask the Instructor a General Question." Please ask general information or assignment questions there so that everyone may see the answers. If you need to contact me on a different matter, please contact me through the e-mail tab of the course website. For this class to work effectively, and for you to remain informed of course developments and latest updates, please login to the course website approximately every 48 hours.

**Response Time and Netiquette:** We will adhere to the following protocols:

(1) If you ask me direct questions in CourseDen via e-mail or the discussion areas, I will generally reply within two working days or 24-48 hours (weekend and holidays are not working days).

(2) Communicating in an online environment takes special consideration and care, so please abide by basic Internet etiquette or [netiquette](#) when communicating online. For example, e-mails must be properly addressed and use appropriate language, tone, and grammar; avoid using acronyms (text message abbreviations); please do not shout (i.e. write using ALL CAPS or large fonts); and keep in mind that your posts are public and cannot be retracted or deleted.

## **DISCLAIMERS**

No student can claim any rights based upon any omission, ambiguity, vagueness, or incompleteness contained in this syllabus. The instructor retains the right to amend this syllabus without prior notice.

## **Fair Use:**

All "Website" content and "Course Materials" for this course are intended for the sole use of the enrolled members only; for the purposes associated with it; and may not be retained, altered, shared, or further disseminated without explicit authorization from the copyright holder.

# WEEKLY CLASS SCHEDULE:

## Module 1 – Introduction

The central objective of this module is to introduce students to the class and each other, and to begin exploring the historical and intellectual roots of the Political Science discipline.

Aug. 07 – 11: What is politics?

In-class exercise

Required reading:

Van Evera, Stephen. 1999. "Hypotheses, Laws, and Theories: A User's Guide." In *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 7-27.

Use this article to help you understand the basic vocabulary of social science research, including political science. You might want to create a conceptual map of this vocabulary to help you understand how these terms relate to one another. Don't worry about memorizing the vocabulary all at once; simply use this text as you would a dictionary. Please note that this vocabulary is used throughout the social sciences, i.e. anthropology, political science, sociology, etc., so it will be helpful across disciplines.

Please keep this glossary of terms handy when you read any political science empirical literature, and any other social science empirical literature.

## Module 2: Reading Workshop

- Student will identify, distinguish among, and locate a variety of types of sources relevant to political science research; and will accurately identify the main ideas and arguments in the texts they have selected for use in their research projects, evaluating them for reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, point of view or bias, and restate them in their own words.

The central objective of this module is to show students how to read Political Science literature. Therefore, the next few weeks will be dedicated to exploring "close reading" techniques to help students understand, summarize, and critically evaluate what they read. The terms active reading, close reading, and critical reading will be used interchangeably.

Required Reading:

Fraser, Gregory, and Chad Davidson. 2012. *Analyze Anything: A Guide to Critical Reading and Writing*. New York: Continuum, Chapter 1-3.

Aug. 14 – 18:

In-class exercise

Aug. 21 – 25:

Tuesday, August 22, 2017 students will bring in an idea, question, puzzle they want to research.

Aug. 28 – Sep. 01:

**Tuesday, 28 August 2017 – Research Question Proposal Due**

Sep. 04 – 08:

Research Question Discussions – In person meetings 9am-2:30pm. We will develop a schedule one to two weeks prior.

The central objective for these one-on-one discussions will be to help you answer some of the following questions: What is an appropriate research question? How do political scientists develop or formulate researchable questions? What makes some research questions better than others? What are useful strategies for developing research questions? What is the role of knowledge, curiosity, imagination, creativity, and discovery in formulating research questions? How can debates in the literature help students develop researchable questions? How can thinking in terms of puzzles help students formulate research questions? How can thinking in terms of problems help students develop questions? What else can help you in particular to develop research questions?

## Module 3 – Locating and evaluation relevant information

- Student will identify, distinguish among, and locate a variety of types of sources relevant to political science research; and will accurately identify the main ideas and arguments in the texts they have selected for use in their research projects, evaluating them for reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, point of view or bias, and restate them in their own words.

Required Reading:

Fraser, Gregory, and Chad Davidson. 2012. *Analyze Anything: A Guide to Critical Reading and Writing*. New York: Continuum, Chapter 4.

Sep. 11 – 15

In-class exercise

Sep. 18 – 22

In-class exercise

Sep. 25 – 29:

**Tuesday, September 26, 2017 Annotated Bibliography Due**

**Friday, September 29, 2017 – Last day to withdraw with a grade of W**

## Module 4: Building essays around your ideas

- Student will create and carry out a formal research design that is consistent with generally recognized standards in political science, and effectively integrate specific information from the materials they have located.

Required Reading:

Fraser, Gregory, and Chad Davidson. 2012. *Analyze Anything: A Guide to Critical Reading and Writing*. New York: Continuum, Chapter 4-6

Oct. 2 – 6:

In-class exercise

Oct. 9 – 13:  
In-class exercise

Oct. 16 – 20:  
In-class exercise

Oct. 23 - 27:  
In-class exercise

Oct. 30 – Nov. 3:  
In-class exercise

Nov. 06 - 10:  
**Tuesday, 06 November 2017, First draft Due**

Nov. 13 - 17:  
In-class exercise

## Module 5: So, you want to be a political scientist, eh?

**Nov. 20 – 24: Thanksgiving Break – No classes**

Nov. 27 – Dec. 1: What is Political Science, again?  
Weber, Max. "Politics as a Vocation."

Keohane, Robert. 2009. "Political Science as a Vocation." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 42(2): 359-363.

Dec. 04 – 08: [Final Exam Week](#)

**Tuesday, 05 December 2017, Final draft due: 11:00am-1:00 pm**

[The goal of this assignment is to allow you the time to review, edit, and improve upon the earlier drafts of your paper. That is, you have done most of the work and now you will have a final opportunity to revise your work.]